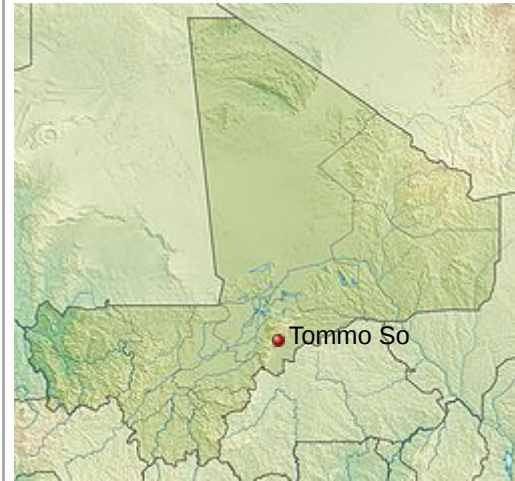# Tommo So

Tommo So is a language spoken in the eastern part of Mali's Mopti Region. It is placed under the Dogon language family, a subfamily of the Niger-Congo language family.[4]

There are approximately 60,000 speakers of Tommo So. Of the twelve Dogon languages, it is the second-most common.[5] It is classed as a 6a (vigorous) language under Ethnologue's language status classifications—the language is "used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable."[6] Children are still acquiring Tommo So as their first language. Bambara and French (Mali's lingua franca and national language) are common second languages for Tommo So speakers, with the former being common among those that have spent time in other areas of Mali, and the latter being used to communicate in the classroom or with foreigners.[7]

Tommo So	
Tombo-So[1]	
Pronunciation	/tɔ̀mmɔ̀ sɔ̀ɔ́/
Native to	Mali
Region	Région de Mopti
Native speakers	40,000-60,000[2] (2013)
Language family	Niger-Congo ■ Dogon 　■ **Tommo So**
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	dto
Glottolog	tomm1242 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/tomm1242)[3]

Location in Mali

Coordinates: 14°20′N 3°25′W

Contents

Phonology

Vowels

Tommo So contains 17 vowel phonemes. There are seven basic vowels spanning four vowel heights and three vowel backnesses.

Basic Vowel Sounds[8]

	Front	Back
High	i	u
High-mid	e	o
Low-mid	ɛ	ɔ
Low	a	

Besides the 7 basic vowels, Tommo So's vowel inventory includes their long counterparts and 3 nasalized long vowels. The placement of vowels in words does not affect their length—long vowels tend to be about 138ms long, and short vowels tend to be about 67 ms long. The nasalized vowels /iːⁿ/ and /uːⁿ/ are present in the language but occur infrequently and irregularly, and are not considered phonemic.[8]

Full Vowel Inventory[8]

Short	Long	Nasalized
i	ii	
e	ee	
ɛ	ɛɛ	ɛɛⁿ
a	aa	aaⁿ
ɔ	ɔɔ	ɔɔⁿ
o	oo	
u	uu	

Consonants

Tommo So contains 17 consonants. There are 5 places and 6 manners of articulation. Consonant length is contrastive—for example, [dɛ̀nnɛ́] and [dɛ̀nɛ́] are considered to be different words—the first means 'look for', and the second means 'spend the day'.[9]

Consonant Inventory[10]

	Bilabial		Alveolar		Alveolo-Palatal	Palatal	Velar		Glottal
Plosive	p	b	t	d			k	g	
Nasal	m		n			ɲ	ŋ		
Fricative			s						h
Affricate					dʑ				
Approximant	w					j			
Tap			ɾ						
Lateral approximant			l						

The consonant inventory includes the alveolo-palatal [affricate](#) [dʑ]—the consonant [ʑ] does not appear by itself. There are a few other consonants sounds that occur in consonant speech (such as [ʔ] and [tɕ]). However, these sounds occur only in [ideophones](#), and are not considered part of Tommo So's consonant inventory.[11]

Syllabic structure

There are eight syllable types in Tommo So: (C)V, (C)Vː (C)VR, (C)VC, N, NCV, NCVː, and CVV. N represents a nasal consonant, and R represents a [sonorant](#). A (C)VC syllable must be followed by an [onset](#) identical to this [coda](#). Some examples of these syllable structures are provided below.[12]

Template	Example	Translation
V	*ὲ.nέ*	'goat'
Vː	*íí*	'house'
CV	*gì.nέ*	'child'
CVː	*nàá*	'cow'
VR	*ém*	'milk'
CVR	*nǎm*	'sun'
CVC	*sɔ́b.bɔ̀*	'dry sowing'
N	*ɲ́.yέ*	'eat'
NCV	*à.ndá*	'udder'
NCVː	*gà.mbáá*	'some'
CVV	*dɔ̀ὲ*	'he arrived'

Tone

Tone is significant both lexically and grammatically. Tommo So contains two [tones](#), high (H) and low (L).[13] Based on an analysis of recorded words, the distribution and placement of H and L tones seem to be governed by a set of patterns that are relatively unpredictable for nouns, numerals, and adjectives, and predictable for verbs.[14]

Lexical Tone

Almost all syllables have an associated H or L tone, and every stem must contain at least one H tone. Although tones are contrastive, there are very few minimal pairs that are only tonally distinctive. A few examples are listed below.

Tonal Minimal Pairs[15]

/L/ tone		/LH/ tone	
náá	'mother'	*nàá*	'cow'
ííyé	'today'	*ììyé*	'honey'
ííyɛ́	'grave'	*ììyɛ́*	'moon'
dámmá	'village'	*dàmmá*	'hoe'
ísé	'empty'	*ìsé*	'dog'

Grammatical Tone

Tommo So, like other Dogon languages, uses tonal overlays. A stem's tones are overwritten by a pre-determined tone overlay depending on the context in which the stem appears.[16] Verb phrases' tones are replaced based on inflectional morphology, and only affect the verb stem. As an example, main clauses' affirmative imperfect overlay is {HL}, and their negative imperfect overlay is {L}. Relative clauses' affirmative imperfect overlay does not change tones, and their negative imperfect overlay is {L}.[17] Given the noun stem [jɔ̀bɔ́] ('run') of the /LH/ tone class, conjugation would result in the following.

Conjugation of [jɔ̀bɔ́] ('run')[18]

		Main clause	Relative clause
Imperfective	**Affirmative {HL}**	jɔ́bɔ̀-dɛ̀	jɔ̀bɔ́-dɛ
	Negative {L}	jɔ̀b-éélè	jɔ̀b-éélè

Noun phrases' tones are replaced based on the relationship between words in the noun phrase, and can affect multiple words. Although verb phrase tonal overlays are strictly defined for all verbs, noun phrase tonal overlays are dependent on the object in the noun phrase being possessed or not.[19]

Morphology

Tommo So is an agglutinative language. In general, when these morphemes are attached to each other, they retain their original form and meaning within the new word. Tommo So's morphology contains affixation, clitics, reduplication, and compounding.

Affixation

As an agglutinative language, the affixation of morphemes plays a major role in Tommo So's morphology. Almost all of the language's bound morphemes are used as suffixes—prefixes are only seen in the form of reduplication, when used for deadjectival nominalization.

Tommo So contains five verbal derivational suffixes, listed below.[20]

Purpose	Suffix
factitive	-ndɛ́
reversive	-ílɛ́
transitive	-írɛ́
mediopassive	-íyɛ́
causative	-mɔ́

Example 1[21]

yɛ̀
see →
'see'

Example 2[22]

yɛ̀-ndɛ́ *dɛ̀bɛ́*
see-FACT (get stuck) →
'watch' 'get stuck'

Example 3[23]

dɛ̀b-ílɛ́ *pɛ́ndɛ́*
(get stuck)-REV (make tight) →
'get unstuck' 'make tight'

pɛ́nd-íyɛ́
(make tight)-MP
'get crowded'

There are some cases in which the 'reversive' suffix *-ílɛ́* does not seem to contain a reversive meaning. For example, the word *yàmá* means 'be ruined', but the word 'yàm-ílɛ́' means 'ruin.' Some derivational suffixes just happen to carry "no discernable meaning at all."[24]

Tommo So does not contain much nominal morphology—the only two meaningful suffix types that attach to nouns are those that implement a human/non-human system and the diminutive suffix *-ý*. In the case below, *íí* is an allomorph of *-ý*.[2]

Example 1[25]
*yàá-**m**=mbe*
female-**HUM**.PL=PL
'women'

Example 2[26]
ɛ́njɛ́ *íí*
chicken **DIM**
'chick'

Clitics

There are a few <u>clitics</u> in Tommo So, including a plural marker *=mbe* and a definite marker *=gɛ* (an example showing both is given below). Clitics are always attached to the end of an entire noun phrase rather than the noun itself.

Plural (noun)
yàá-m=mbe
female-HUM.PL=PL →
'women'

Plural (noun phrase)[25]
yàà-m *kómmó=gɛ=mbe*
female-HUM.PL skinny=def=PL
'the skinny women'

In general, clitics are always attached to the end of a stem, and never the beginning.

Reduplication

Reduplication is used for different purposes in Tommo So's morphology. The first is deadjectival nominalization, and the second is adjectival distribution.

Deadjectival nominalization

The process of nominalizing an adjective requires for the adjective stem to be reduplicated, either in part or in whole. At minimum, the first syllable is reduplicated. However, in the case of multisyllabic adjectives, up to the entire word can be reduplicated. A tone shift also occurs during this process. Regardless of how much of the original word is duplicated, the resultant noun has the same meaning.[27]

Adjective stem	Noun	Translation of noun
kúnɔ́	*kù~kùnɔ́* *kùnù~kùnɔ́*	'thickness'
wánnu	*wà~wànnú* *wànnù~wànnú*	'width'
kábárá	*kà~kàbàrá* *kàbà~kàbàrá* *kàbàrà~kàbàrá*	'flatness'

Adjectival distribution

The reduplication of an adjective is used to distribute its meaning across a given number of objects.

Example 1[28]
Gìnè ɛ̀su~ɛ̀sù   néé-go=sɛ-m.
house pretty~pretty two-ADV=have-1SG
'I have two very pretty houses.'

Example 2[29]
Jàà ɛ́lɛ́lu~ɛ̀lɛ̀lù néé-go ɲ̀y-ɛ̀-m.
meal sweet~sweet two-ADV eat-PFV.L-1SG
'I ate two good meals.'

Compounding

There are two types of compounding in Tommo So: nominal compounding and adjectival compounding.

Nominal compounding

About a third of the known lexicon of Tommo So consists of nominal compounds, of which most are right-headed.[30] Some examples of nominal compounds are provided below.

	Example 1[30]	Example 2[31]		Example 3[32]	
	nɛ̀m táá	*bòmbòm yòògú*		*hɔ̀ɔ̀làl bàŋáá*	
	salt door	candy sap		trust owner	
	'slab of salt'	'chewing gum'		'trustworthiness'	

Bahuvrihi compounding

Bahuvrihi compounding in Tommo So occurs when a complex noun is created by attaching an adjective to the end of a noun.

	Example 1[33]			Example 2[33]		
	ǹdɛ̀ *áŋá* *wɛ̂y*			*àn-nà-y*	*dɔ́lɔ́* *póò*	
	person mouth light			male-HUM.SG-DIM	testicle fat	
	'gossipy person'			'boy with large testicles'		

Syntax

Basic word order

Tommo So's basic word order is subject-object-verb (SOV).[34] Examples of this are shown below.

Example 1[35]

Mòòmíyó mí=ǹ   támbá-gú=sɛ.
scorpion 1SG.PRO=OBJ strike-ppl=have
'The scorpion is striking me.'

Example 2[35]

Mí   áí=ń   màŋgóró ób-aa=be-m.
1SG.PRO friend=OBJ mango   give-PFV=be.PST-1SG
'I gave my friend a mango.'

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